Maintaining a Harmonious Pattern of Life for the Freedom of Religion and Belief for the Community of Semarang City

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Abstract. This article's script discusses how to maintain a harmonious pattern that is well governed by state laws and policies for the needs of the community. The research aims to discover the patterns of harmony formed within the community of Semarang City to be tested in the current time using appropriate social theories. The research method employed is a qualitative approach, and empirical legal research was conducted on the multicultural society in Semarang City to explore the patterns of harmony in the freedom of religion and belief. The empirical legal research is supported by an ethnographic approach from a socio-anthropological perspective to obtain comprehensive data findings specific to the community of Semarang City. The expected research outcome is to uncover the patterns of harmony in the freedom of religion and belief for the community of Semarang City.

Keywords: Harmony, Multiculturalism, and Freedom of Religion

1 Introduction

The Indonesian nation possesses a wealth of diversity in terms of ethnic groups, cultures, religions, and beliefs. According to the 2010 Census conducted by the Central Statistics Agency (Badan Pusat Statistik), there are approximately 1,340 ethnic groups in Indonesia. However, in comparison to Djoko Widodo's statement on kompas.com on August 1, 2018, the population was around 260 million, consisting of 714 ethnic groups residing in more than 17 thousand islands from Sabang to Merauke and from Miangas to Pulau Rote. Regarding religions recognized by the state, there are six official ones: Islam, Catholicism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Kong Hu Chu. Additionally, there are 187 recorded beliefs (faiths) acknowledged by the government, with the highest number found in Central Java Province, which includes 53 different belief groups. These beliefs are supervised and empowered by the Directorate of Faith in the One Supreme God and Tradition, a division of the Directorate General of Culture under the Ministry of Education for guidance and empowerment purposes[1].

The diverse ethnic groups, religions, and belief systems in Indonesia require continuous

management to ensure the preservation of cultural expression rights guaranteed by the state, as stipulated in Article 28E(1) of the Constitution, which grants freedom to embrace and practice one's religion, and Article 29(2) that guarantees the right to worship according to one's religion and belief. Furthermore, these two constitutional articles are elaborated in Article 4 of Law Number 39 of 1999 concerning Human Rights.

In an ideal setting, the state and its institutions should provide facilities and administration to fulfill the freedom of religious and belief expression for all citizens, including those who follow various belief systems. However, in reality, there are still instances of violence and intolerance concerning religious freedom, as highlighted in a report by the SETARA Institute, particularly related to disturbances in places of worship. The report revealed the following insights: In 2022, there were 15 incidents of disturbances in mosques and 13 incidents in churches, reflecting intolerance towards places of worship. It's important to note that most of the mosques that experienced disturbances were affiliated with the Ahmadiyah movement or other "different" Muslim groups compared to the mainstream.

Intra-religious intolerance also exists, where cases of rejection and disturbances in mosques primarily originate from fellow Muslims and typically occur in regions with a Muslim majority. In September 2022, there were four incidents of disturbances in Buddhist temples (vihara), indicating a rise in such incidents compared to the previous years. The disturbances were spread across various locations, including West Java, North Sumatra, and South Sumatra. These viharas were rejected due to their construction in areas with a Muslim majority, and concerns were raised about possible Buddhist influence (Buddhanisasi). Efforts are required to address these issues and promote a more tolerant and inclusive society that respects and protects the freedom of religious expression for all citizens, regardless of their beliefs or affiliations [2].

 Compared to the findings in the Wahid Foundation's report for the year 2019, there were 184 incidents with 215 actions in that year. This number decreased compared to the year 2018, which had 192 incidents with 276 actions (Wahid Foundation, Annual Report on Freedom of Religion and Belief in Indonesia, Progress Without Addressing Root Problems, p.34). The prospects for the freedom of religion and belief in Indonesia still have the potential to coexist harmoniously among different religious and belief communities, as indicated by the data from the Setara Institute in 2021 concerning the Tolerant City Index, which uses a scale from 1 to 7. The index includes various factors, such as Development Plans (10 percent), Discriminatory Policies (20 percent), Intolerance Incidents (20 percent), Civil Society Dynamics (10 percent), Public Statements of the City Government (10 percent), Actual Actions of the City Government (15 percent), Religious Heterogeneity (5 percent), and Religious Social Inclusion (10 percent). Cities that consistently ranked high in intolerance were Salatiga, Singkawang, Manado, and Depok, as they were the least intolerant cities with the lowest scores, specifically 3.577. They were followed by Banda Aceh (4.043), Cilegon (4.087), Palu (4.233), and Langsa (4.363). These findings suggest that there are positive developments in terms of religious tolerance in various cities in Indonesia. However, there is still room for improvement to ensure that all citizens can coexist peacefully and harmoniously, regardless of their religious or belief affiliations. Efforts to address root problems and promote inclusive policies are essential for further progress in this area. [3]

The above facts serve as evidence that the Author and the team proposed an initiative in the

area of Semarang City to nurture a harmonious pattern in the legal aspects of religious freedom and belief, as each city has unique characteristics in dealing with and handling interactions regarding religious freedom and belief among fellow followers and across different religious and belief groups.

2 Method

This article is written using a qualitative approach method and combines normative legal research and legal socio-anthropological approaches, along with an ethnographic legal approach. The ethnographic approach is necessary to target the uniqueness and characteristics of ethnic groups residing in a particular area and their adherence to the prevailing laws, especially for the community of Semarang City in locations like Klenteng Gang Lombok, Gang Baru, and Gergajen, which represent religious and belief minorities. Primary, secondary, and tertiary data sources are used to strengthen findings and data analysis. Data collection techniques include observation, interviews, and literature study.

3   Result

The term "religion" has two meanings: firstly, as an uncountable noun, it refers to the belief in a god or gods and the associated activities like praying or worshipping in a place of worship such as a church or temple. Secondly, as a countable noun, it denotes a particular system of belief in a god or gods and the activities connected with that belief system. On the other hand, according to Article 18 of the UNHCHR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), religion includes beliefs that consist of theistic, non-theistic, and atheistic perspectives, granting the right not to adopt any religion or belief. This means that the understanding of religion is diverse, ranging from belief in a deity to a lack of belief in any deity. UNHCR's perspective on religion provides protection for individuals to choose whether to have a religion or not, granting them equal rights.

The concepts of freedom and liberty are often used interchangeably, but philosophically, they can be differentiated based on the concepts of "liberty" and "freedom." Liberty, derived from the Latin word "liberated," refers to civil or political freedom, the state of being free, and freedom from restraint. Liberty is an external construct related to the politics of a state. It represents a situation in society where people are free from oppression imposed by authorities and can adopt their political views. Liberty refers to individual freedom, seen as a prerequisite for achieving all human aspirations. One of the proponents of liberty is John Locke, who talked about natural rights inherent in every human being, such as the right to life, liberty, and property. On the other hand, freedom is a state that exists within the minds of everyone. It is the integrity from within, a feeling of living without conflict, contradiction, or division. It aligns with the principles of Stoic philosophy. Even if a person's body is imprisoned, their mind can still be free. Freedom is inherent in human beings; it exists within them as part of their fundamental nature[4].

State Actor	No		Case Number
	1.	Forcing of Religion	18
	2.	Religion Based Discrimination	13
	3.	Neglection	11
	4.	Religion Based Discrimination	10
	5.	Restriction of Religious Activity	10
	6.	Religious Apostasy	8
	7.	Prohibition of Religious Activity	7
	8.	Banning of Religious Symbols	4
	9.	Hate Speech	3
	10.	Persecution	2
	11.	Limitation of Religious Activity	2
	12.	Revocation of Property Legal Status	1
	13.	Elimination of Property	1
	14.	Intimidation and Death threat	1

The report above can be summarized as a conflict regarding the freedom of religion and belief centered around state actors, which is ironic considering that the state is supposed to guarantee and protect the rights of followers of various religions and beliefs, both majorities and minorities. Meanwhile, our research conducted in Semarang City focuses on the worshippers in the temples representing the minority. The reason for targeting this group is that although their numbers are small, their worship activities are active and regular. The goal of the research is to investigate the patterns of harmony in the freedom of religion and belief practiced by the religious and belief communities in the temple areas. The interviews conducted between June to August 2022 in these three temples revealed the following findings.

No	Name of temple	Host Deity	Location	Information

1.	Tay Kak Sie	Kwan Sie Im Po Sat	Lombok Alley	founded in 1746 largest and most complete of the number of Gods and Goddesses needed by adherents of Chinese Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism and are open to other adherents and have periodic arrangements to manage and administer the worship process; side by side with the office of the Foundation health clinic for the general public is periodically active.
2.	Siu Hok Bio	Earth Deity (Hok Tek Ceng Sin)	Gang Baru	founded around 1700 (the oldest temple in Semarang City). Those who pray for the merchants need the prosperity and welfare of their trading business, having a management foundation that periodically manages and takes care of the worship process.
3.	Grajen/Klenteng Obat	Jalan Grajen Karanglo No 203 Semarang	Hian Tian Siang Tee	Having a management foundation periodically manages and takes care of the worship process.

Based on these findings, it is crucial to anticipate potential conflicts or disputes and work on measures to address them proactively. Understanding the unique needs and perspectives of the minority religious followers in Semarang City can help authorities and communities foster an environment that respects and safeguards the freedom of religion and belief for all citizens, regardless of their religious affiliations. Taking proactive measures can help prevent conflicts and promote mutual understanding and respect among different religious and belief groups, contributing to the establishment of a culture of peaceful coexistence in the city.

No	Factor	Parties	Anticipation	Resolution	Information

1.	Internal	Between the management of the foundation and adherents of religions or beliefs who pray at the temple because parties outside the management of the foundation try to control the management of the temple	Give only flexibility to worship rituals, not to the management of the foundation.	Bringing together the ranks of the board of foundations with the same vision Providing a meeting office place behind the pagoda for administrators of the new religion that is recognized by the state for a meeting forum for adherents to pray at the pagoda	The reason for the party wishing to a. take control of the management of the foundation is that there are demands for new adherents who are recognized by the state to fulfill the number of places of worship, so there is a strong suspicion that controlling the management of the foundation one can also control the entire protocol process of worship (rituals) and the authority to regulate pagodas is broader. Compared to just being a party praying in the pagoda. The pagoda foundation has long been managing to provide access and the right to life and

				freedom of religion and belief to those who plan to control the management of the pagoda.	
2.	Eksternal	Neighborhoods	indications of the intervention of certain community groups outside the city of Semarang to question political and religious polarization as a commodity during the construction of a large replica Ceng Ho ship along the river with the aim of religious tourism and culinary entertainment Routinely opens social services to the general public across ethnicities religions, and beliefs	The pagoda manager dismantled Ceng Ho's large artificial ship Provide donations from donors and have good relations with government and security forces	circa 1998 The social services held by each pagoda vary depending on the focus of the ritual and donations.

The latent anticipation activities aim to reduce the development of underlying disputes and conflicts, ensuring that the worship process takes place smoothly and harmoniously with the surrounding environment, leading to divine blessings for followers of different religions and

beliefs. The findings and data analysis above are based on the theory of multiculturalism proposed by Ricardo L. Garcia. The theory encompasses concepts, models, and strategies for teaching in a pluralistic society, emphasizing the importance of respecting and valuing diversity in a community. By applying the principles of multiculturalism, the goal is to create an inclusive and tolerant environment where individuals from various religious and belief backgrounds can coexist peacefully and harmoniously. This approach helps prevent potential conflicts and promotes mutual understanding and respect among different religious groups, fostering a culture of unity and acceptance in the city[5].

4   Conclusion

The patterns of harmony in the freedom of religion for the sustainability of the three temples above strive to reduce and anticipate the development of disputes and conflicts as a minority group amid the majority community. They achieve this through:

> a. Internal aspect: They reorganize and respond quickly to potential sources of conflict by aligning the vision of the temple management or foundation to avoid disputes and conflicts.
>
> b. External aspect: They engage in periodic and regular social service activities, such as distributing essential food items, providing free medical services, conducting prayer ceremonies for the departed souls from diverse ethnic, religious, and belief backgrounds to seek peace, and fostering social-cultural and spiritual relationships in both micro and macrocosmic realms. By undertaking these measures, the temples aim to maintain peaceful coexistence with the majority community and nurture a harmonious environment where all individuals, regardless of their religious or belief affiliations, can live together in unity and understanding. These efforts contribute to the preservation of social, cultural, and spiritual relations in both the micro and macrocosmic dimensions, encompassing both the individual and the broader community.

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